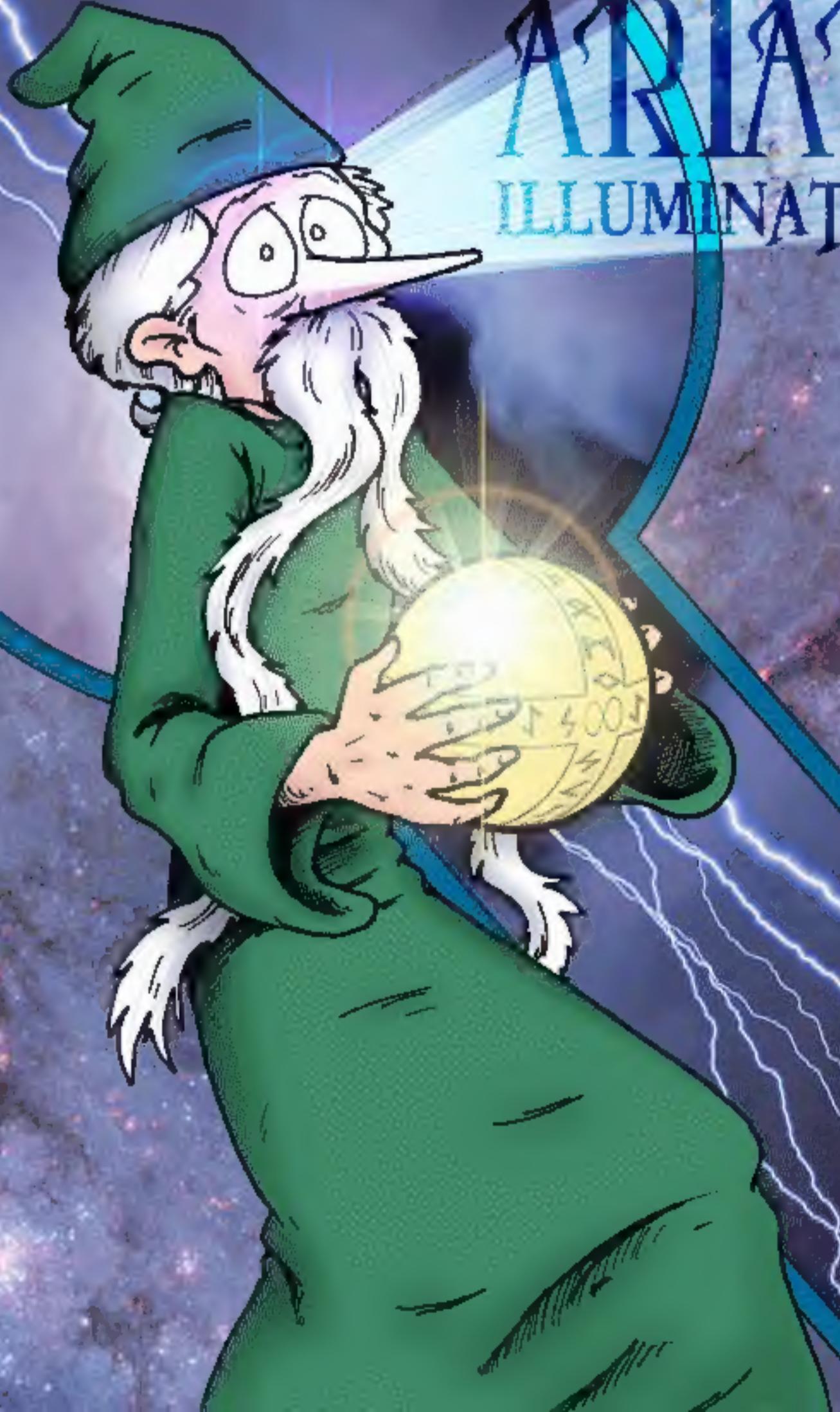




\$2.99 #20

# Nodwick™

ARTAX  
ILLUMINATED



# Nodwick in: ARJAX ILLUMINATED

BY AARON WILLIAMS

or

"The Know-  
It-All Ball"







YEAGAR, DON'T YOU THINK YOU'RE WORKING NODWICK KIND OF HARD TODAY?

NOT AT ALL! HE'S NOT UNDER ANY MORE STRAIN THAN USUAL.

BUT YOU HIRED THAT OTHER HENCHMAN, SO I THOUGHT MAYBE HE COULD. UM, HELP NODWICK MORE?

I CAN'T LESSEN THE WORKLOAD FOR NODWICK! HE'D GET THE WRONG IDEA OF HOW WE OPERATE AND PROBABLY START TO COMPLAIN WHEN WE ACTUALLY NEED HIM TO CARRY STUFF!

BESIDES, NITWICK IS THE HEAD GUY, AND HE SHOULD BE CUT A LITTLE SLACK. NODWICK IS SUPPOSED TO BE MENTORING HIM, BUT I HAVEN'T HEARD ANYTHING COME OUT OF HIS MOUTH EXCEPT COMPLAINING.

AND CRIES OF PAIN.

THAT'S COMPLAINING, TOO.

YOU'RE NOT STILL MAD HE FOUND OUT YOU ONCE HAD A GIRLFRIEND AND THEN HELPED TO RUIN YOUR FAVORITE CUSSWORD, ARE YOU?

**NOT AT ALL! PERISH THE THOUGHT!**

I GUESS SOMETHING ELSE IS BUGGING HIM.

RUMMAGE...



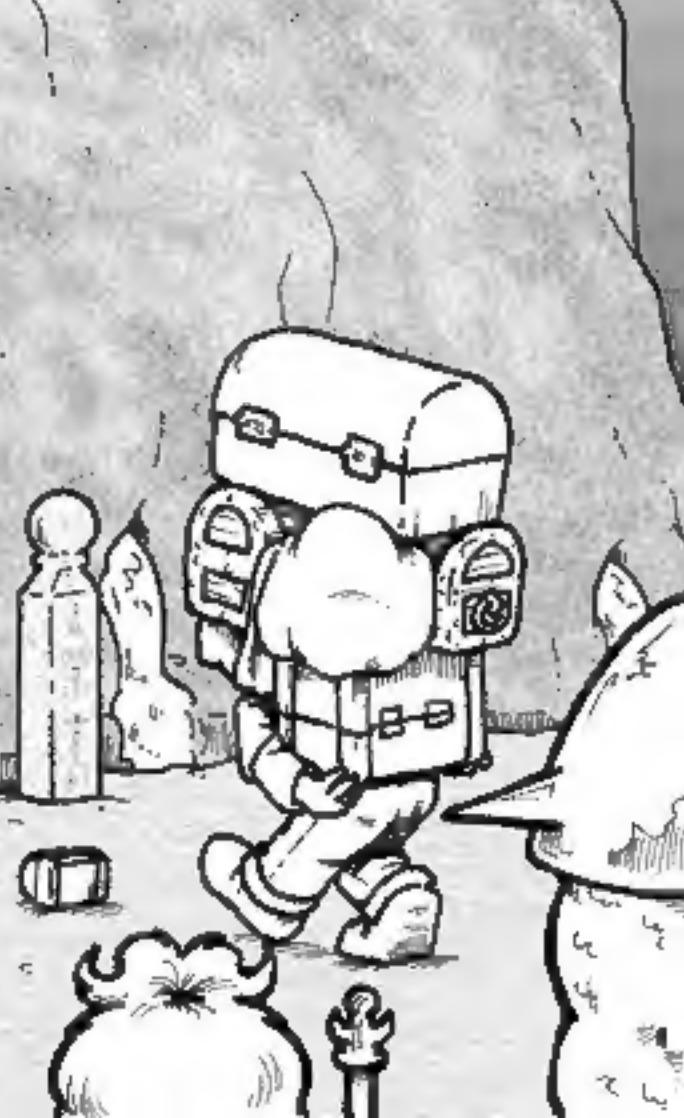
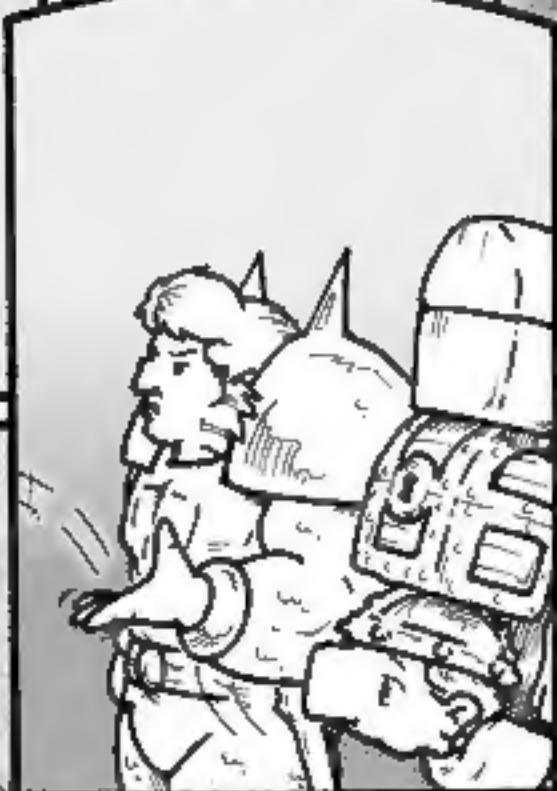


THIS LOOKS  
TRAD-TACULAR...

YOU MAY BE RIGHT.  
THOSE STONES IN FRONT OF THE BRIDGE  
ARE MAZARD WAYMARKERS. IF WE GET CLOSER, THEY'LL  
ACTIVATE. IT MIGHT NOT BE DANGEROUS. THEY  
MIGHT BE USED MERELY AS WARNINGS OR  
TO IMPART INFORMATION.



IT LOOKS FINE  
FROM HERE.



HALT! KNOW THAT YOU  
ARE ABOUT TO ENTER THE STRONGHOLD OF  
VORU, A WIZARD SO POWERFUL AS TO BE LIKENED TO  
A FORCE OF NATURE. KNOW ALSO THAT THE MOUNTAIN  
BEFORE YOU WAS PULLED FROM THE GROUND  
BY MY OWN HAND.

YOU ARE NO DOUBT HERE IN  
SEARCH OF AN ARTIFACT I POSSESS.  
KNOW THAT IT CARRIES WITH IT A  
BURDEN TOO GREAT FOR EVEN  
ME TO BEAR.

BEGONE, LEST YOUR  
MINDS BE BROKEN ALONG WITH  
YOUR BODIES!

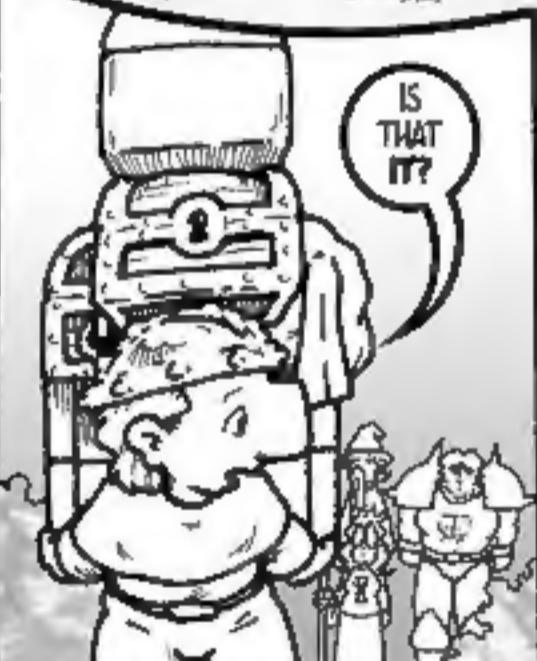
W



IS  
THAT  
IT?

NEVER ASK  
RHETORICAL  
QUESTIONS NEAR  
ACTIVE MAGIC...

MAYBE IT JUST  
TELEPORTED HIM AWAY.  
NO NEED TO PANIC.



NOPE, IT CRISPY-FRIED HIM.  
SOMEONE GET A BROOM.



I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS, ARTAX. IT SEEMS LIKE THERE ISN'T A HAPPY ENDING WAITING FOR US AT THE TOP OF THIS TOWER.

LOOK AT IT THIS WAY, YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO JUST LEAVE SOMETHING THIS POWERFUL LYING AROUND, WOULD YOU?

WELL, NO...

SO IF WE HAVE IT, SOMEONE WORSE DOESN'T, RIGHT?

ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU SAID RIGHT BEFORE WE GOT THE FONT OF ALCHEMY?

WELL...

THE TOWNS WATER SUPPLY STILL TURNS WHITE CLOTHING PINK IF YOU AREN'T CAREFUL.

HEY, ART? NOT TO BE A WET BLANKET, BUT SHOULDN'T WE HAVE MET RESISTANCE OF SOME KIND BY NOW? WE'RE ALMOST HALFWAY UP THE TOWER!

NO WE AREN'T. I CAN STILL SEE THE BRIDGE.

I CAN TELL YOU FOR ALMOST A CERTAINTY THAT WE SHOULD BE AT LEAST TWELVE STORIES ABOVE GROUND BY NOW.

WOW! THAT'S WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT! HENCH IT TO THE MAX!

NODWICK'S WHINING IS RIGHT. WHAT'S GOING ON?

IT MUST BE AN ILLUSION. THE QUESTION IS, WHAT KIND? WE COULD BE TELEPORTING BACK TO A LOWER PORTION OF THE STAIRS, WE COULD ACTUALLY BE NEAR THE TOP AND NOT KNOW IT...

LET'S HEAD BACK DOWN AND THINK THIS THROUGH.

AN HOUR LATER.  
WE SHOULD'VE REACHED THE BOTTOM BY NOW.

HENCH ON!

THAT'S IT. WE'VE BEEN CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

MAYBE NOT...



MANY UNSEEN STEPS FOLLOW...

SIGH. MORE MOUNTAIN. AT LEAST THERE'S A WIDE LEDGE.

COME ON, NODWICK! LET'S GET THE LEAD OUT!

YEAGAR, ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE—

NEVER BETTER!  
OH, LOOK! MORE MOUNTAIN  
TO WALK ON!

THAT'S  
THE WORST  
GOOD MOOD  
I'VE EVER  
SEEN.

PLEASE  
MAKE SURE I'M  
NOT ALONE WITH HIM FOR  
THE NEXT FEW DAYS,  
OKAY?

OUR HEROES ARRIVE AT A MIST-SHROUDED BRIDGE...

I GUESS  
WE HAVE TO  
CROSS.

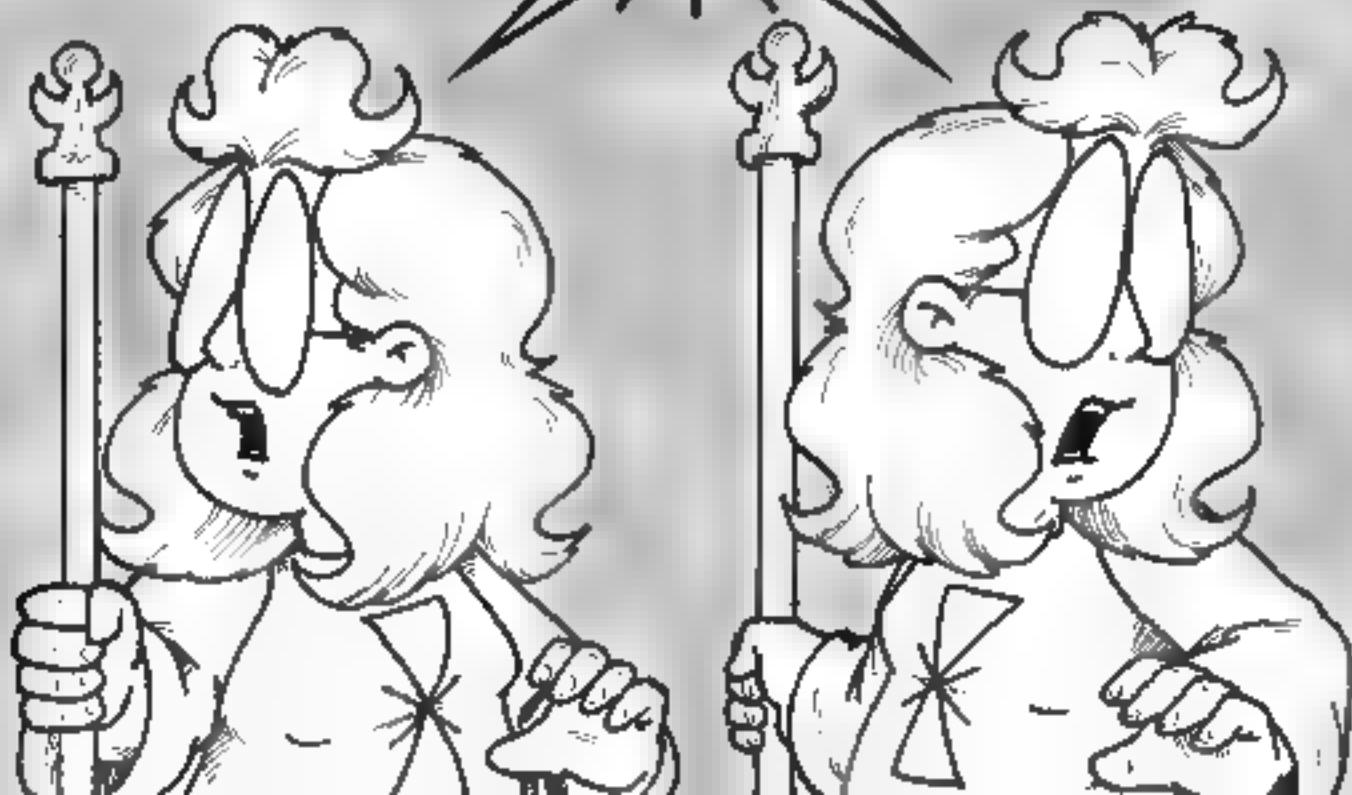
BUT THAT  
TAKES US AWAY  
FROM THE  
TOWER!

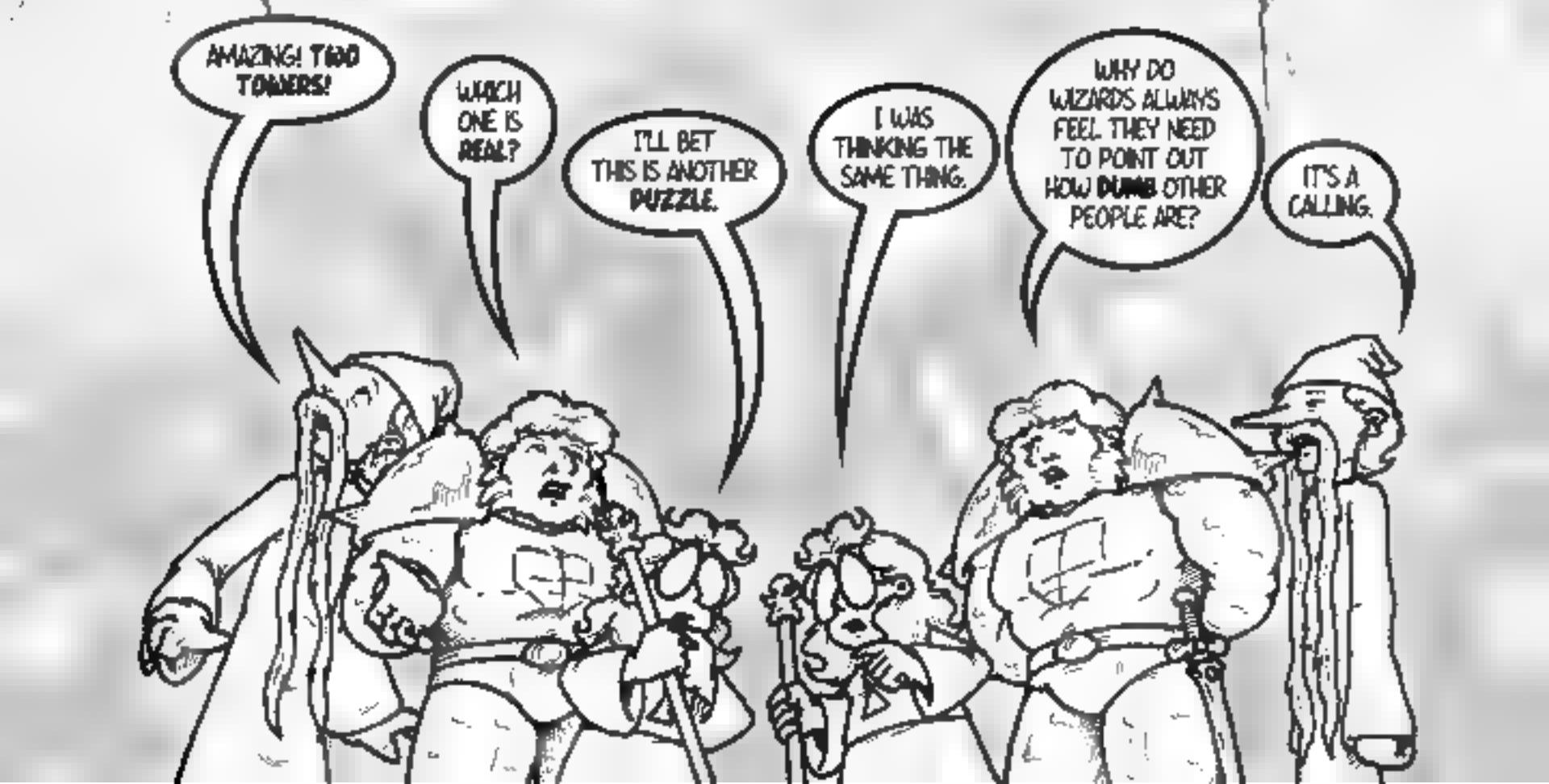
I DON'T  
SEE ANYWHERE  
ELSE TO GO,  
DO YOU?

MEANWHILE,  
A CHANCE  
TO REST.

YOU  
SAID IT.

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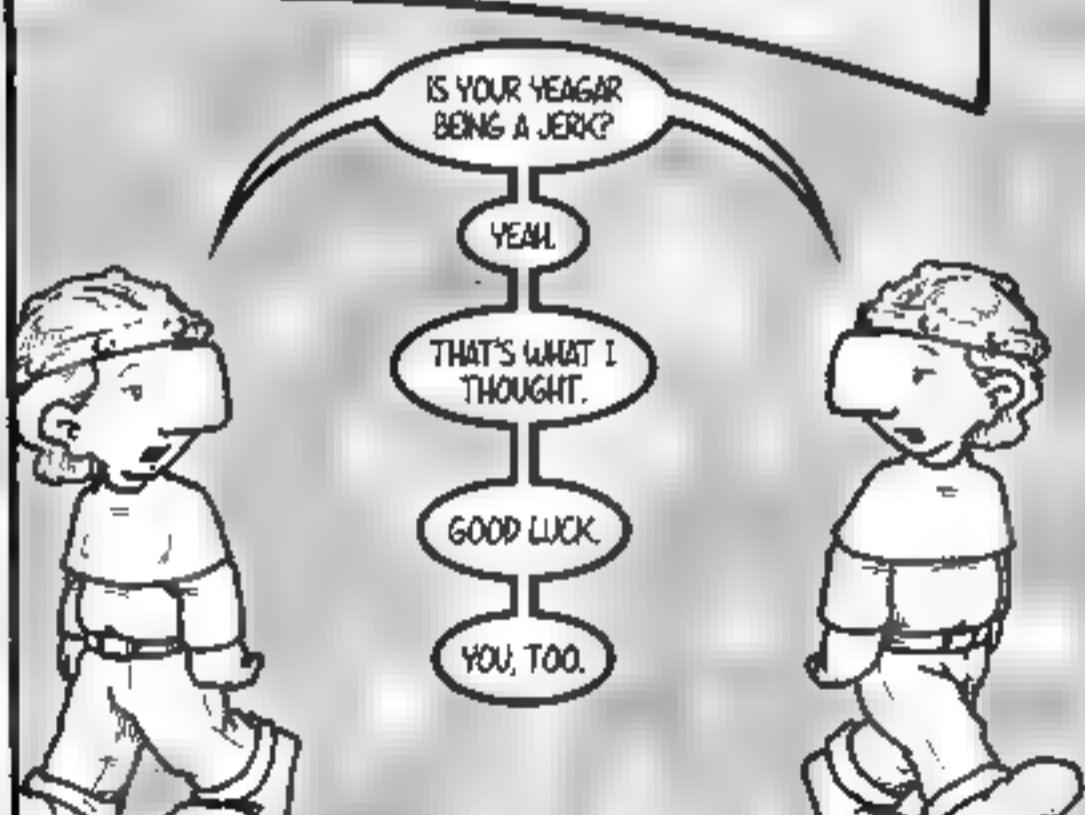
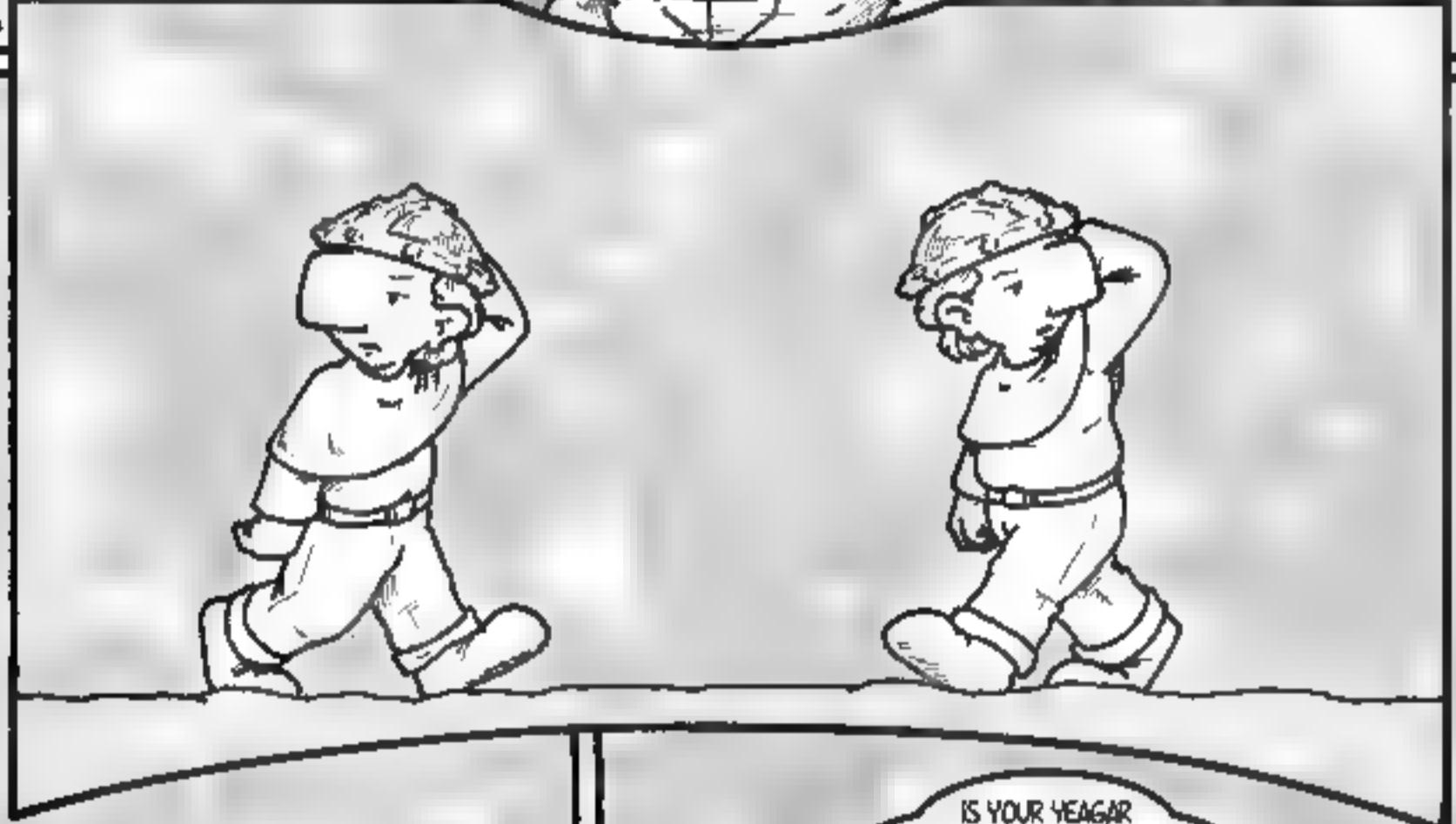




BESIDES  
WHICH, MY DOUBLE  
WILL BE LEAVING HIS  
IDENTICAL PILE OF  
STUFF ON THE OTHER  
SIDE. HE CAN JUST TAKE  
THIS IDENTICAL PILE OF  
STUFF HERE WHEN  
HE CROSSES,  
CAN'T HE?

LOOK.  
DON'T ARGUE  
WITH—

GET MOVING.  
YOU'RE HOLDING UP  
THE SHOW.



I'LL BET OUR DOUBLES ARE ALSO ENCOUNTERING A DOOR THAT WASN'T THERE BEFORE.

THIS IS MAKING MY BRAIN HURT.

I HOPE IT'S IS THE LAST MIND-TWISTER YOU HAS IN STORE FOR US...

YOU FOOLS ARE STILL RACING TOWARDS YOUR DOOM, I SEE.

KNOW THAT UNLESS YOU UNRAVEL THIS RIDDLE, RETURNING TO THE BRIDGE WILL BE TERMINAL.

I PRESENT YOU WITH YOUR FINAL CHALLENGE: ONE DOOR LEADS TO THE TOWER'S REMAINING CHAMBERS. THE OTHER WILL RELEASE A BLAST OF DEATH THAT WILL POWDER YOUR FLESH IN AN INSTANT. BE LUCKY AS WELL AS CLEVER, AND YOU MAY SUCCEED.

THERE'S NO CLUE HOW TO CHOOSE!

I DON'T SUPPOSE WE COULD JUST GUESS?

LOOK HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE GUessed IN THE PAST. YOUD THINK ONE OF THEM WOULD HAVE OPENED THE RIGHT DOOR BY NOW.

HEY, LOOK! A COIN!

NICE WORK, NODWICK! YOU ACTUALLY EARN YOUR KEEP. HERE, NODWICK, DO SOMETHING USEFUL AND ADD IT TO OUR HAUL.

HMM. USUALLY  
WHEN WE FIND STUFF LIKE  
THIS OUT IN THE OPEN, IT'S  
PART OF A TRAP OR—

WE'RE GOING  
TO HAVE TO PICK ONE, SO WE  
MIGHT AS WELL—

WAIT!  
THE HEADS ABOVE  
THE DOOR!  
I THINK I  
KNOW WHAT  
TO DO!

WHAT'S  
THAT?

KEEP IT  
DOWN! CAN'T YOU  
SEE HE'S TRYING TO  
THINK?

YOU SAID WE'D  
HAVE TO BE LUCKY AND CLEVER.  
SO, WE HAVE TO FLIP THAT COIN  
TO FIND OUT WHICH DOOR  
TO OPEN!

IT'S GOT  
HEADS ON BOTH  
SIDES! IT WON'T  
WORK.

THE HEADS  
HAVE DIFFERENT  
EXPRESSIONS. FLIP  
IT, AND MATCH THE  
HEAD.

IT LOOKS  
LIKE THE HEAD ON  
THE LEFT.

HERE GOES...



IT'S JUST NOT AT THE SPEED OF THOUGHT, OMNISCIENCE IS CONSIDERABLY QUICKER THAN CORPOREAL MOTION.

I DO SAY, YOU'RE A SIGHT LESS DOUR THAN THAT YORU CHAP. ALTHOUGH NOT AS POWERFUL, IT WOULD SEEM, HE MUST HAVE UNDERESTIMATED HIS CHALLENGES.

NOW LET'S NOT BE RUDE. ARTAX HAS COME A LONG WAY FOR HIS PRIZE, AND HE SHOULDN'T BE INSULTED BY IT, SHOULD HE?

I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH TIME HE'LL HAVE, THAT FELLOW WITH THE GLOWING EYES IS COMING RIGHT UP THE STAIRS BEHIND HIS FRIENDS AND HE'S GOT QUITE A NASTY SPELL IN THE OFFING.

WHAT WAS THAT LAST PART AGAIN?

AH, YES... HE'S BEEN RUNNING AROUND WITH BAPHUMA'AL. PITY THAT GOD IS CAUSING TROUBLE AGAIN. COULD BE THE END OF EVERYTHING.

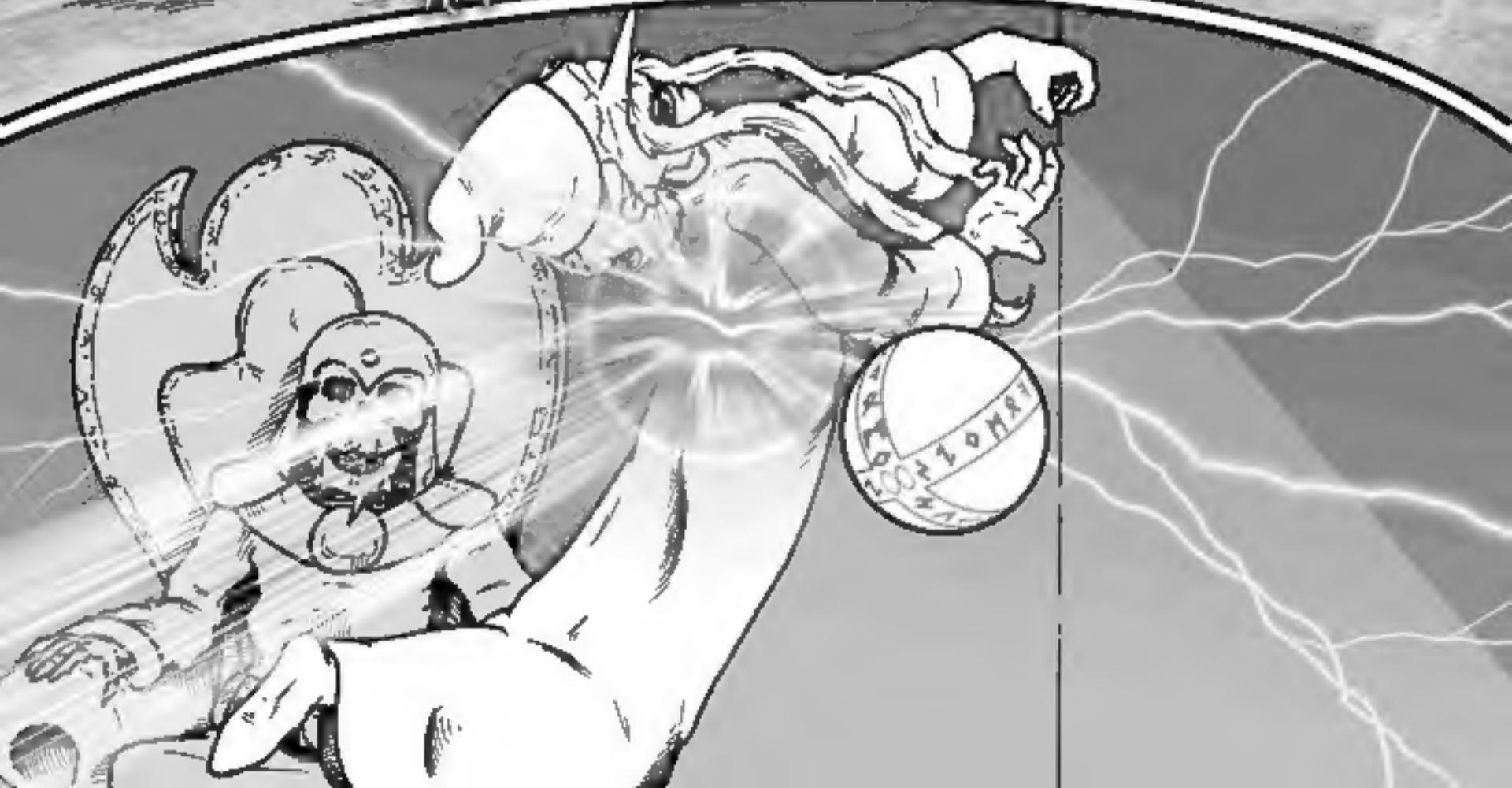
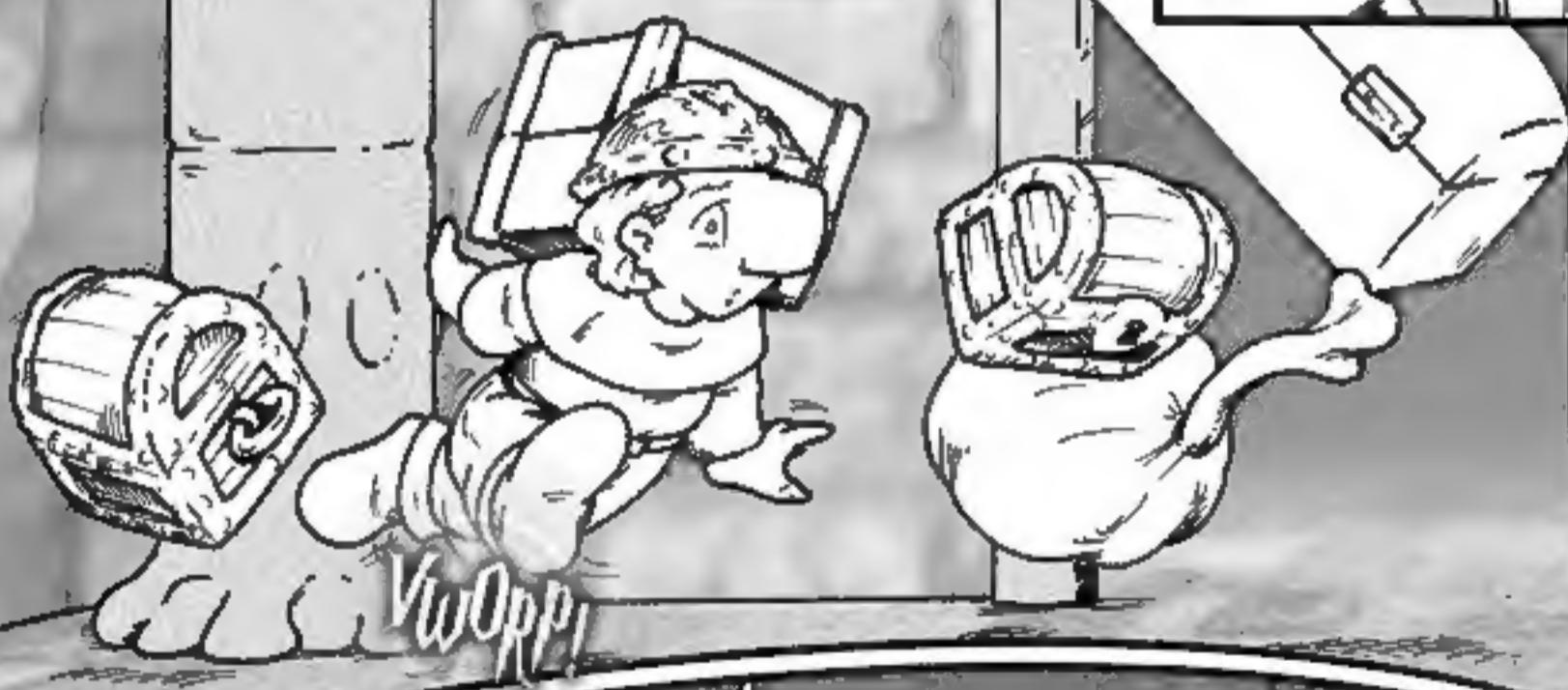
SORRY FOR NOT INTRODUCING OURSELVES, AT LEAST COLLECTIVELY IF NOT INDIVIDUALLY. WE'RE THE SORCERERS AND WIZARDS WHO ORIGINALLY CREATED THE ORB OF OMNISCIENCE. WE PUT BITS OF OURSELVES INTO THE ORB TO KEEP IT RUNNING AND TO ACT AS A KIND OF INSTRUCTION MANUAL FOR PEOPLE WHO WOULD USE IT. THERE ARE ALSO THE ECHOES OF PREVIOUS USERS IN HERE, WHO YOU'LL MEET LATER.

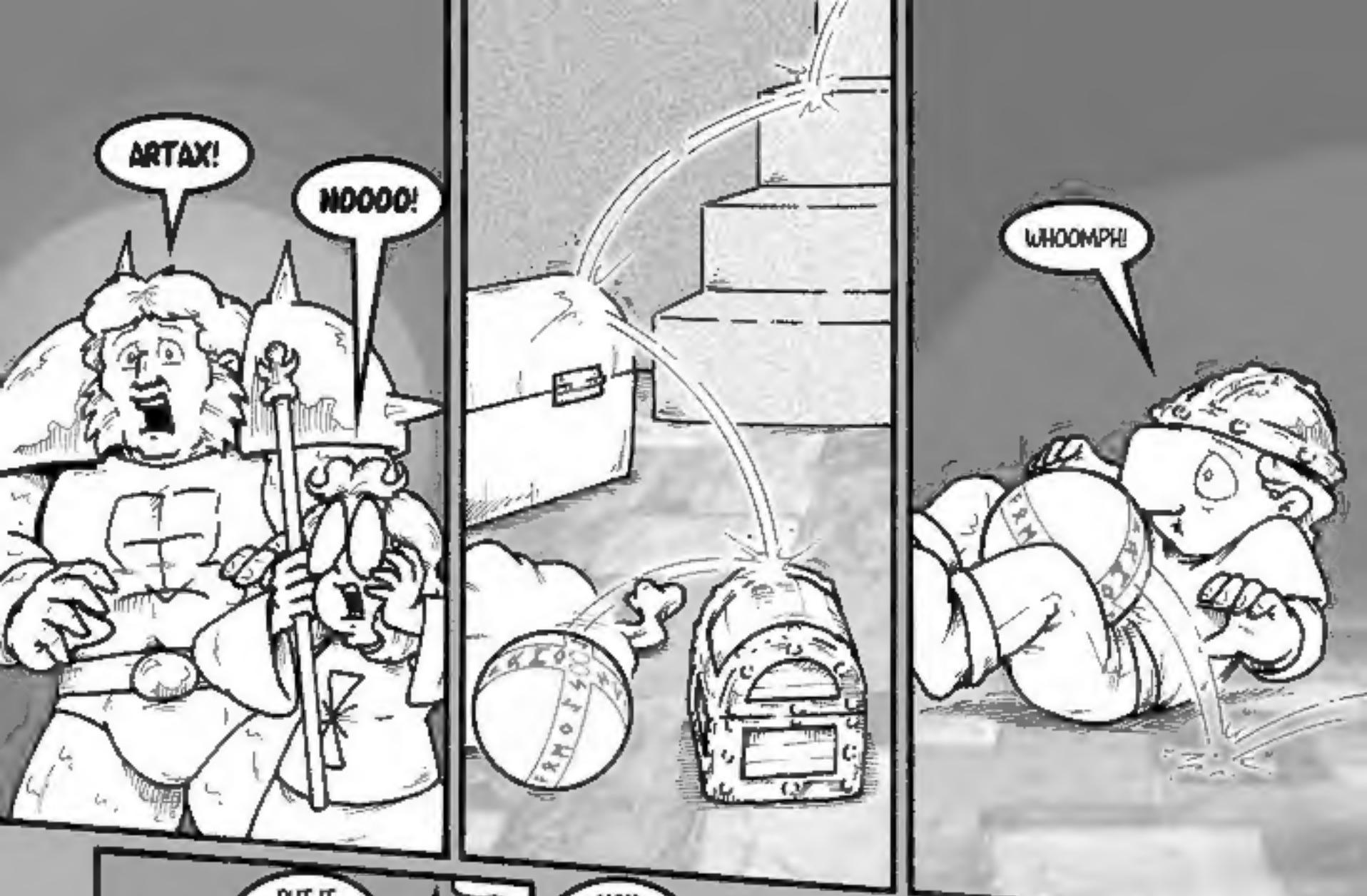
QUITE. WE'RE ALSO HERE TO EASE YOU INTO THE ORB'S POWER. KNOWING EVERYTHING ALL AT ONE GO WOULD MOST LIKELY SHATTER YOUR MIND. AND THERE ARE ENOUGH IMBALANCED PEOPLE HERE AS IT IS.

I DO BELIEVE I HAVE BEEN INSULTED. WAIT, I HAVE ACCESS TO ALL KNOWLEDGE YES, I HAVE BEEN INSULTED!

I'VE NEVER SEEN A SPELL FROZEN IN TIME BEFORE. AMAZING!









ISSUE #2



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